



Be scientific

On GM mustard for farms, the Centre must privilege reason over politics in taking the call

With the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, an Environment Ministry body that evaluates genetically modified crops, approving transgenic mustard for environmental release, a key hurdle remains before farmers can cultivate it: Environment Minister Anil Dave's approval, under a procedure set down by the UPA government. In 2009 the GEAC approved Bt brinjal, developed by Mahyco and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, for commercial release. As Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh overruled the GEAC clearance in 2010 and changed its status from an approval committee to an 'appraisal' committee. The issue before Mr. Dave is this: go by the expert findings of the GEAC and decide the issue on scientific merits, or opt for a replay of the Bt brinjal case. Broadly, the then government's exceptionalism on Bt brinjal was framed along these lines: it was an edible substance unlike Bt cotton; long-term studies may be required to check its safety and environmental impact; it involved technology developed by the multinational Monsanto (which had an indirect stake in Mahyco). On the other hand, GM mustard (DMH-11) was developed by a team of scientists at Delhi University led by former vice-chancellor Deepak Pental under a government-funded project.

In essence, it uses three genes from soil bacterium that makes self-pollinating plants such as mustard amenable to hybridisation. This means local crop developers have the equivalent of a platform technology to more easily develop versions of mustard with custom traits such as higher oil content and pest resistance. It has also gone through safety and toxicity tests (on mice) prescribed by the regulator, but this is unlikely to convince opponents of GM technology. Many of them are opposed to the commercial release of any form of transgenic plants; they fear that introducing genes from soil bacterium or other forms of animal life into plants will amount to playing with the natural order of plant life. Proponents of GM crops say plants and animals are constantly swapping bacterial genes with air, soil and water, and also that the only way of determining if a gene can produce proteins toxic to humans is to subject it to a systematic testing process. Years of field tests on transgenic corn, soyabean and brinjal in other countries have shown no health risks that vary with their non-GM versions. The concern that DMH-11 employs a gene that will compel farmers to use specific herbicides and be dependent on one or two companies deserves serious attention. However, these are matters for the government, regulators, labour markets and the courts to decide. Farmers need technology, new knowledge and governmental support to get the best out of their seeds. Successive governments have failed to move on the draft National Biotechnology Regulatory Bill, 2008 that would enable a biotechnology regulator to take shape. Sans such legislation, issues to be decided on the basis of science will be at the mercy of political expediency.

One step forward

Colombia is confronted with new challenges even as integration of FARC rebels gains pace

Ending a civil war-like conflict is never easy. In some ways it is more difficult to end than a conventional war, as it leaves many festering wounds that prevent a re-integration of warring groups. In the case of Colombia, which has experienced two lengthy civil wars involving left-wing guerrilla forces of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the smaller National Liberation Army (ELN), the challenges are that much more. Last year, President Juan Manuel Santos, whose efforts were rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize, achieved a breakthrough by signing a peace accord with the FARC, which agreed to demobilise following concessions such as amnesty for many of its rebels and transition to a civilian political party. The accord had a setback with its rejection thereafter by a narrow margin in a referendum, and since then Mr. Santos has taken a piecemeal approach to achieving peace with the FARC. After months of negotiations that retained the guarantees of political participation to FARC rebels, measures related to rural land reform, batches of FARC rebels, whose numbers are estimated to be close to 7,000, began disarming their units and weaponry in demobilisation camps across the country. For the first time last week, a group of 12 rebels formally became civilians as United Nations monitors certified their integration. This is a milestone in the ending of a five-decade-long civil war, but as expected, every step taken towards peace is fraught with new challenges.

Some dissidents within the FARC, including those who were part of the negotiations that led to the accord, have refused to give up arms, fearing retribution from right-wing paramilitary groups following their integration. These dissidents were believed to be behind the kidnapping of a UN anti-narcotics official. Meanwhile, the retreat of the FARC from the forested rural areas, including where coca production thrived, has created a vacuum that criminal and paramilitary groups have tried to fill. Also, the demobilisation of the FARC and the peace process have coincided with the murder of many social activists in Colombia, many of whom were taking up issues related to agrarian rights and the environment. This retribution by paramilitary groups is reminiscent of the previous resistance to peace attempts between the FARC and the Colombian government in the mid-1980s. Activists claim 40 such murders have been committed this year, much higher than the average in violence-prone Colombia. This could well foil the peace process and lead to a new phase of paramilitary violence. How Mr. Santos negotiates this challenge, besides taking on former President Álvaro Uribe's continued opposition to the peace process, will determine the future of the milestone accord and its implementation.

Clamping down on crime

The police's perception of public safety and their own role is changing, but too slowly



R.K. RAGHAVAN

The Nirbhaya ruling on May 5, where the Supreme Court confirmed the death penalty for four of the accused in the gang rape and murder case of a paramedical student in Delhi in 2012, is also an occasion to examine certain fundamental assumptions about policing. This takes into account protests after the incident that squarely blamed the Delhi Police for its failure to protect the victim. It is debatable whether the police alone were blameworthy here. Both the state and community at large have a role in shaping public safety, especially that of women and children.

A reading of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* will help one understand the genesis of the state and how it needed to legitimise its authority through the evolution of the police as we know it today. The creation in 1829 of the Metropolitan Police in London and the setting up of a similar organisation in New York and other large cities in the U.S. paved the way for organising the police in many western democracies and for our own police forces set up by the British in the early 1900s. The focus of law enforcement was initially on disciplining unruly elements disturbing public peace rather than on hunting for criminals depriving others of their life and property. Crime was petty in those days, not requiring any sophisticated methods of investigation and detection. Now, it is not only widespread and violent but also sophisticated with the abundant use of technology. A fallout is rising fear in a community, especially among elders,



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

women and children. It is my conviction that the police force must address this fear in a focussed manner. It is my lament that many unenlightened governments in our country do not evaluate police performance by this yardstick. Police pliability to serve political ends rates higher in their agenda.

A trust deficit

What does the common man expect of the police? Several surveys point to a demand for protection of life more than guarding individual property. With the phenomenal expansion of the geographic area to be policed and the mind-boggling increase in the number of lives to be guarded, the Indian police, more than in many western democracies, have been stretched and outnumbered. There are only about 140 policemen per 100,000 people, a very poor ratio when compared to other modern democracies.

The strongest criticism against the police is of their preoccupation with the problems of the political party in power and those of the rich and famous. This resonates with the dictum that all are equal (in a constitutional democracy), but some are more equal than the others. This is why the 10,000-odd police stations in the country are shunned by the better-off sections,

who prefer organising themselves to ward off threats or buy safety services from other sources. The phenomenal rise in private security agencies accounts for the growing lack of trust in the state police. This is a shameful but real state of affairs in most of India.

Lessons from abroad

What is the way out? Drawing lessons from elsewhere in the world is not beneath the dignity of the Indian police. Learning in public administration is a recognised healthy exercise the world over. I am not for a moment suggesting that this is not happening at present. I am only pleading for a greater readiness to sink our egos and borrow from the best practices of foreign police organisations.

Two recent happenings — one each in the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the Metropolitan Police, London (Met) — come to mind readily. Under its legendary Commissioner, Bill Bratton, more than a decade ago, the NYPD instituted a COMPSTAT (short for COMPuTer STATistics) programme, that analysed crime with the help of computers, identified crime hotspots and took preventive action, such as intensified patrolling. Police commanders in New York were made to report to the commissioner each week ex-

plaining how they were tackling crime in their jurisdictions. This mechanism not only brought about greater attention to crime in the field but also enhanced police accountability at the grass-root level.

The NYPD has recently gone beyond COMPSTAT by hiring a reputed private agency to survey public opinion on police performance. Focussed questions over mobile phones and the responses obtained look at how to fill visible gaps in policing. The effectiveness of this unique tool will depend on how forthcoming and honest the respondents are. Variants of this have indeed been tried in a few of our cities by some smart police leaders. We have not heard enough about their outcome to comment on their utility.

Contrary to popular belief, London is now a high-crime city. There is not only public concern over looming terrorist threats but also over youth crime. There are at least three or more stabbings a day carried out by teenagers. Although guns have made a recent entry, it is crime using sharp and small knives that is fuelling anxiety. The Met has launched a major campaign against street crime that involves frisking and seizure of knives — a visible, street-level operation that has enhanced security perceptions. The use of large manpower has been the hallmark of this operation. Physical checks of youth in the streets has added an element of deterrence. This is analogous to the 'stop and frisk' practice of the NYPD, whose focus on the non-white population has often drawn flak, especially from African-Americans. Mr. Bratton and his successors have had to tone down the exercise. This is a real danger that the police face while working for greater public safety. Any overzealousness is liable to make the police a villain. Given the high corruption among the police in India, proced-

ures such as 'stop and frisk' carry the risk of greater public harassment and dishonesty at the cutting-edge levels.

Some hope in India

In my view, there are at least two features which offer a glimmer of hope for community safety in India. The first is the availability of a corps of leadership in the form of technically savvy young Indian Police Service officers who have a stake in working closely with the community to carry out experiments in the field to upgrade safety at minimum cost to the government. They can borrow from several studies under the rubric of 'evidence-based policing'.

The second is the spread of Internet use at all levels of the police. An offshoot is the use of social media in day-to-day policing. Information on crime incidents and criminals is as a matter of course conveyed to the public in many urban centres with encouraging results. Citizens are also encouraged to report crime through email or over social media. This practice gives no option for the police but to act without fail and swiftly. The participation of the print and visual media in this dialogue gives further fillip to the exercise of sensitising the police to the community demand for safety through police processes.

The police's perception of public safety and their own role here is changing, but only slowly. Many of us are impatient over the pace at which it is happening. We must realise that the Indian police is a behemoth and will respond faster only if there is constant pressure exerted on it by well-organised community leaders and the media.

R.K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director, and Member, International Advisory Board, Institute of Criminology, Cambridge University, U.K.

Mixed signals from Toronto

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's presence at a Khalsa Day event raises troubling questions



SUHASINI HAIDAR

For the past four decades, terrorism has been an important factor in India's foreign policy. Long before the 9/11 attacks spurred the United States into announcing a "global war on terror", India was fighting its own battles: in Kashmir and Punjab, and with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam both internally, as well as internationally, where action on terrorism was a key component of bilateral relations.

A consistent stance

While there were countries where terror groups trained or were funded, such as Pakistan, or Bangladesh (pre-2008), there were still others such as the U.S., the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada where groups sympathetic to these extremists supported their activities. Through these decades, India's bilateral relations with these countries have been closely aligned

to their actions on terror. At the UN in 1996, much before the phrase "global war on terror" gained currency, it was India that first introduced the concept, proposing a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism that it still hopes will be adopted by all members. India's message is simple: each country must adopt a zero tolerance policy to all violent ideologies that threaten ordinary citizens. India's position has become more strident, with a push for the UN designation of terrorist groups as well as raising the issue of Pakistan-based terrorists at international fora including the G-20, BRICS and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

Given that position, it is surprising that the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) chose to react meekly to the decision by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to attend the "Khalsa Day" parade organised by the Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council in Toronto on April 30. The images of pro-Khalistani militants are often brought out at these parades, as many of the marchers call for the establishment of a separate Khalistan, and this year was no exception. India had worked to ensure that Stephen Harper, Mr.



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK

Trudeau's predecessor, didn't attend the same event, and it wasn't coincidental that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2010) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2015) visited him during his tenure as a result. That Mr. Trudeau chose to make his appearance in a year he plans to visit India is all the more startling.

The issues

To be clear, the issue isn't one of free speech or freedom of association. Neither is it to deny the brutal, shameful anti-Sikh violence of 1984. In India too, organisations are allowed to protest the events of 1984, as well as other wrongs perpetrated in India. But the occasion

Mr. Trudeau chose to appear at had several other issues with it.

First, it included several hard-to-miss posters and floats that glorified militants who included Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, and Bhai Amrik Singh, who died in Operation Blue Star. Another photo was that of Talwinder Singh Parmar, a former leader of the Babbar Khalsa International that carried out the bombing of Air India's 'Kanishka' flight in 1985 as well as a related bombing incident in which two Japanese baggage handlers were killed in Tokyo. Parmar died in a police encounter in Punjab in 1992.

Second, the celebrations also honoured two legislators who had authored resolutions in the Ontario Assembly which declared events of 1984 as a "Genocide". India had objected to the resolution when it was passed on April 6, both in official statements and in the meetings with visiting Canadian Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, who himself comes with his own baggage, given his previous associations with these groups. In 2011, the Canadian government was forced to issue an apology to India after Mr. Sajjan, then the commander of the British Columbia reserves, sent military personnel to attend a 'remem-

brance event'; photos of the same militants were displayed here.

The third reason could have troubling repercussions. The Genocide resolution in the Assembly, which was hailed at the parade wasn't restricted to the anti-Sikh riots, but to "events of 1984", and activists say it criticises the Indian Army's actions in Operation Blue Star as much as the riots.

Finally, the Khalsa Day event also displayed flags and signs for "Referendum 2020", a plan by local groups for a worldwide vote for all Sikhs, including those in Punjab, to vote for a separate homeland.

Mr. Trudeau attended the Khalsa day event just days after India's last protest, and it is surprising that the government chose not to issue a statement. It took more than a week for the MEA to respond mildly, in an answer to a question: "We have taken up such issues in the past with the government of Canada, and in this particular instance too, that practice has not been discontinued." India cannot afford to handle the issue with kid gloves.

suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Hit by 'Ransomware'

The misuse of cyber technology seems to be the latest weapon of mass debilitation ("India largely safe from cyberattack", May 14). Over-dependence on digital technology has become inevitable for a world that has to use computers to run tasks big or small, private or public, financial or administrative. However advanced the technology developed may be, there is always a threat of being attacked with malware. If India has largely escaped this time, it may only be a matter of time before the next attack succeeds. Before going full throttle as far as cyber technology is concerned, India should keep in mind the havoc cyber mischief can create.

DR. D.V.G. SANKARARAO, Nellimarla, Andhra Pradesh

A note about OBOR

We need not worry too much about the Belt and Road Initiative right now ("India to skip B&R Forum", May 14). Years later, the full success of this initiative will require India's participation

and China cannot afford to ignore New Delhi. There are strong possibilities that the OBOR's working will face huge security issues emanating from Pakistan. That will be the moment of truth for China. It must even be prepared to write-off a chunk of the investment if the internal social and security situation in Pakistan is any indication.

M. BALAKRISHNAN, Bengaluru

The Jadhav appeal

India's move to take up the case of Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav before the International Court of Justice was the right step given the poor state of human rights in Pakistan. Given the already existing state of damaged bilateral relations, there was nothing much to lose anyway (Editorial - "Saving Jadhav", May 13). India's proactive step will not only expose Pakistan's machinations before the international community but also give it a taste of its own medicine as it has often flouted bilateral mechanisms by dragging us to international fora. India

should also strive to get international opinion on the matter and continue to apply pressure on Pakistan for consular access and a fair trial.

ARPIIT GOEL, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

On triple talaq

The issue of triple talaq is basically a human rights issue more than an issue concerning women. That is why it has been done away with by legislation in many Muslim countries. This is a practice prevalent among a minority community and when any change is brought about in a climate where the party in power has a strong ideology, the move is bound to be viewed politically. Therefore, it is better that the change is brought about by enlightened Muslim organisations and strong women's movements. The issue may be constitutional but political realities also cannot be ignored.

N.G.R. PRASAD, Chennai

Jhulan's feat

Jhulan Goswami's setting a world record in women's

cricket is special for its own reasons (Editorial - "Simply the best", May 13). Traditionally in cricket, India has never been known to produce quality fast bowlers in any format. The BCCI has only recently started acknowledging the importance of women's cricket, but more needs to be done. I recollect Mithali Raj attributing the poor performance of the Indian women's cricket team to the lack of exposure to international cricket. More international tournaments need to be planned to address this lacuna. We can also think in terms of a women's IPL (Australia Big Bash League has it), with free entry for spectators.

JISHU J. RAJU, Thiruvananthapuram

Vikrant, then and now

My eyes welled up as I read the article, "In the heart of the iron beast" ("Ground Zero" page, May 13) — on the building of India's new and indigenous aircraft carrier *INS Vikrant* at the Cochin Shipyard. It was exactly 57 years ago when I was sent to

stand by during the construction of the first *INS Vikrant* at the Harland and Wolff Shipyard, that built the *Titanic* in Belfast, North Ireland. Named *HMS Hercules*, it was one of the three carriers which were launched in 1943 but never commissioned. The other two were sold to the Australian Navy and Canadian Navy, rechristened as *HMAS Melbourne* and *HMCS Bonaventure*, respectively. I remember losing my way in the maze of gangways and staircases on the first day. I was proud to be a member of the commissioning crew and doubly delighted when I was appointed the flight deck chief — the first Indian. The then new powerful BSIO Catapult equipment — to launch aircraft at an end speed of 100 mph — was a beast of a steam machine. I distinctly remember the first test flight programme in the sea off Belfast, when Royal Naval officers were still present while we were launching Gannets jet propeller aircraft. As we were leaving, Big

Sam, the foreman in the yard, told me: "Be watchful as in this test run someone may be in danger to his life." I had a youngster, Inamdar, who was assisting me while launching the first sorties. We were on our knees as the aircraft revved up to full thrust. I gave a thumbs up when the firing button in the Howdah (the control cabin) was pressed. Inamdar, who was crouched next to me, raised himself despite my warning not to and was instantly blown away by the jet exhaust. After two rolls on the deck he hit an iron clip of the magazine locker. He was flown to a London hospital but declared dead on arrival. Sam was right. We reached Bombay late that year and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Defence Minister V. K. Krishna Menon came to receive us. I served on the ship in the same capacity for over three and half years, till I left the Indian Navy in 1963.

K.R.A. NARASIAH, Chennai

MORE LETTERS ONLINE: www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

Getting the model right

The debate on command reorganisation in the military would gain from studying examples worldwide



PETER ROBERTS

If the three single service chiefs all agree on the need to have a Chairman or Chief of Defence, the debate in India over further high command reorganisation (integrated command versus joint command) reported last week poses tough questions for military theorists. The issue of a Joint Doctrine for the Indian Armed Forces in April touches on this issue. In essence, high-level command must be tailored to the requirements of senior political leaders as well as commanders, but there are some guiding principles and worthy examples that should be examined in order to set a firm foundation for any debate.

It is important to acknowledge what the aim of civilian and military command structures are. In Europe, command has become more about controlling forces and orchestrating military effects but this is based on experiences in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya rather than more taxing war fighting scenarios. Thus, instead of simply replicating a particular model, it is worth examining the purist theory of high command as exercised by others.

The American way

Perhaps the most detailed examination of command models was the study that led to the Goldwater-Nichols Act in the U.S., which established the Combatant Commanders (COCOMs) in 1986, dividing the world into theatres with a leader to command each one. Each commander remains in post for several years, becoming an expert of his region, building relationships and understanding his adversary in exacting detail. The commander is the hub of decision-making for that theatre, prepared to fight his own campaign with the forces provided to him. Each theatre commander bids for forces from a central staff.

The central staff – whether a minister of state, a chairman of the chiefs, or a combined panel of senior leaders – is responsible for the prioritisation of missions between theatres, the allocation of troops to task according to national priorities, and to provide advice to political



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

leaders. Single service commanders for the Army, Navy and Air Force continue to exist, but now focused on generating platforms, units and people to the central pool of resources. The Navy, Air Force, marines and Army still oversee training and preparedness of their forces before certifying them as fit for task. They are also responsible for sustainment and support for those forces en route to and recovering from theatre commands (more applicable for land forces), as well as supplying key maintenance for units once in theatre.

This clear division of responsibility has been widely regarded as a progressive model that mitigates the critique of inter-service rivalry. Indeed, it was that rivalry that stimulated the Packard Review and the emergence of the Goldwater-Nichols model. However the reality of the theatre type command structure is not without disadvantages. First, theatre commanders are not constrained to a force structure when they conduct an estimate of their requirements; their combined requests always exceed the force structure they rely on. Whether it is the number of AWACs, artillery, engineers or mine-hunters, there is never enough to go around. This causes friction between leaders but in true military style commanders tend to complain privately but fight on nonetheless. This does not lessen the risk each faces.

Second, the seams and boundaries between commanders are always an area of weakness and competition between commanders. Adversaries have been known to exploit these in the past. Careful agreement about coordination between commanders is critical to avoid leaving a vacuum

of control in such areas. Finally, the military-enabling functions do not always follow geographic boundaries. A single AWACs aircraft might be servicing two theatre commanders at once, but will need to have the authority to prioritise their sensors rather than become the object of a dispute during a mission.

Equally, adversaries and their activities do not abide by COCOM boundaries. Cyber-actors, terrorists and criminal groups do not constrain themselves to geographic theatres and have become frequent examples where U.S. commanders have difficulties in pursuing them in a coherent fashion.

The alternative to a COCOM structure is the service command model in which service chiefs remain responsible for their own warfare domain. This leaves the single service staffs to conduct missions and undertake military activity as availability of platforms and people allows for. The clear delineation between warfare domains allows single service commanders to prioritise assets in the most-effective manner across competing demands (and hopefully in the national interest).

Support between commands is requested between the chiefs, and is sometimes delivered. This source of friction – for example, where there are insufficient air defence aircraft to meet the needs of each service – can become a long-term issue and has previously resulted in service commanders buying their own equipment.

For example, fleet air arms emerged since national Air Forces would not prioritise resources for maritime missions. The inefficiencies of such a system are generally thought to outweigh the advantages.

Historically, this type of command suited the U.K. until about 1980. It allowed the Royal Navy to prioritise and deploy ships so that they just appeared around the corner from flash-points in a most prodigious way. If one believes in the smart commanders who don't need formal orders, this system can work well. But it also relies on plentiful assets. It isn't efficient (but then neither is warfare), and in the drive for optimised forces this flexibility was removed long ago. As a result, this methodology of high command has been superseded in many states.

The reality is close to the theoretical model in some ways, and far apart in others. But in either case, the key is that the theatre-command structure (or any alternative) is only as good as the centralised decision-making structure that allocates and apportions effort between competing commanders.

A time for review

It would be wrong to examine only the U.S. and British models, both of which have flaws and idiosyncrasies. There are other ones worthy of examination before such a critical decision is made for India. The Israeli national command structure is interesting, employing both area commanders and a home command to deal with civil emergencies, over a much smaller geographic area. Sri Lanka's experience of joint command, developed in the heat of long-term confrontation with the LTTE, is also worthy of delving into. Neither should we forget that both the U.S. and NATO are undertaking reviews into their command structures at the moment. Goldwater-Nichols might not survive very long.

So what? In summary there is no right answer but if there are scarce military resources, centralised prioritisation is the key with subordinate commands having ownership of the right assets to accomplish their mission. Reviews and debates of command models should be a regular feature of mature militaries, but regrettably they are not. The inter-service concerns are valid and the process of change is bloody, bruising and painful both for individual commanders and their services. Yet, militaries do not exist to serve themselves, but to beat adversaries. Sometimes that consideration is obscured during the heat of the debate.

Peter Roberts is Director of Military Sciences at the Royal United Services Institute, London

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Maladies and remedies

The recent ABC report puts in perspective the ongoing battle of attrition between news and fake news



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Last week, the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) released the figures for the print media that busted the myth that print is dying in India. The data showed that 2.37 crore newspaper copies had been added in the last 10 years despite stiff competition from television and digital media.

The figure went from 3.91 crore in 2006 to 6.28 crore in 2016. That puts the Compound Annual Growth Rate at a staggering 4.87% for the decade that witnessed a bloodbath in the Western news media markets. As a Readers' Editor, I was drawn more towards the observations made by the team members of the ABC rather than the numbers they put out.

"In no other market in the world you would find this. A rise in education, growth in the economy, and the fact that print remains the best place to source credible information from, are the reasons for the 4.87% growth," said ABC council member Shashidhar Sinha. The word 'credible' was defining. It puts in perspective the difference between journalism and misinformation, and the ongoing battle of attrition between news and fake news, where the traditional values of truth, holding those in power accountable and providing context seem to have survived despite multiple digital distortions.

The cancer analogy

One of the challenges for news ombudsmen is to explain the key concepts that are used to build journalism. Terms such as 'trust', 'credibility', 'public sphere' and 'informed choice' that define both the editorial judgement and the readers' engagement with a newspaper do have an abstract quality to them. Is it possible to explain these terms in a language that has a material basis? How effective are analogies in dealing with these terms that are central not only to journalism and the information ecology but are fundamental to the idea of democracy itself?

The briefing by the ABC team took me to an unusual destination. I reached out to *The Emperor of All Maladies* by cancer physician and researcher Siddhartha Mukherjee. The human body became the symbol of our cognitive universe. If cells make up our physical body, it is pieces of information that make up our cognitive world. The cell as a metaphor for information, primarily news, held on even when I subjected it to closer scrutiny

using both the legal and the ethical frameworks that govern the world of journalism and the world of medicine.

Dr. Mukherjee elegantly describes the two forms of cell growth. "Cell divisions allows us as organisms to grow, to adapt, to recover, to repair – to live. And, distorted and unleashed, it allows cancer cells to grow, to flourish, to adapt, to recover, and to repair – to live at the cost of our living. Cancer cells can grow faster, adapt better. They are more perfect versions of ourselves," he wrote. His exploration of the idea of distorted growth of cells can be used to look at the lopsided growth story, which fails to address inequality and perpetuates the trickle-down theory. But, that is another column. Here, let me stick to the single metaphor of cancer cells as fake news.

Fake news is not going to go away. Dr. Mukherjee begins his book with a quotation from Susan Sontag in which she described



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTOS

the inherent dual citizenship of everyone – in the kingdom of the well and the kingdom of the sick.

She called illness 'the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship'. Sontag's declaration about our being is true for news and fake news as well: "Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place".

Dr. Mukherjee recollected one of the powerful descriptions of the cancer: "a relentless and insidious enemy among human diseases". It propelled him to look at this deadly, historical illness – which is not one disease but many diseases – and come up with a tour de force that contextualised the malady, with a hope of finding a remedy. The ABC's figures confirm that editors are oncologists trying to curb the 'relentless and insidious enemy' among information called fake news.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

SINGLE FILE

The forgotten 'other'

PM Modi's address to hill-country Tamils was a nod to their importance

T. RAMAKRISHNAN



When Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on his recent visit to Sri Lanka, addressed a large gathering of hill-country Tamils in Norwood, Central Province, it marked a symbolic recognition at the highest level of the Indian government of the role of the "other" Tamils. He became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the hub of hill-country Tamils. He also announced that Indian government would fund the construction of an additional 10,000 houses.

Unlike Tamils of the Northern and Eastern Provinces who had, more than a century ago, realised the importance of English education, the hill-country Tamils constitute the most backward and underprivileged community. A year ago, senior Minister Lakshman Kiriella, who also hails from the Central Province, summed up their plight when he told Sri Lanka's Parliament that "this is the only community where the majority do[es] not own a piece of land or a house".

Plantation workers

The hill-country Tamils owe their origins to Tamil Nadu, especially the State's southern districts. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, their ancestors, mostly Dalits, were taken to Sri Lanka as indentured labourers to work in coffee plantations and, later, those of tea and rubber. They still work predominantly in the plantations. Yet, their contribution to the economy can be gauged from the fact that tea exports had netted \$1.29 billion in 2016, accounting for 12.3% of export earnings. While the community's leaders put the population of the hill-country Tamils at 1.6 million, the 2012 Census puts the figure at about 8,40,000 – 4% of the country's overall population.

Despite Sri Lanka being known for its impressive development indicators, the position of the hill-country Tamils presents a stark contrast. Official statistics say that compared to the national figure of neonatal mortality rate of 11 per 1,000 births, it is 29 per 1,000 births in the estates. Likewise, stunting affects 40.2% of children living in the estates, as compared to 18% at the national level. In terms of political representation, the hill-country Tamils, once "stateless persons", now have eight Members of Parliament, of whom two are Cabinet Ministers. As per an official estimate, around 1.6 lakh houses are required to be built to replace 'line rooms' or barrack-type structures where the community has been living for over a century. Conscious of this basic problem, the Indian government has also come forward to build 4,000 houses, of which the first phase, covering 1,134 houses, is under way. The community would also expect New Delhi to come to its rescue for upgrading 30,000 'line rooms'.

Education is another area where India's help is needed in a big way, says P. Muthulingam, a veteran civil society activist based in Kandy. Hardly 150 students of the community go to universities every year against the general intake of around 25,000. The Indian government can come out with a special scholarship programme for the community. Also, there is a dearth of Tamil instructors for vocational training.



CONCEPTUAL Roving bandit

POLITICAL SCIENCE

A term used to explain the incentives for governments that expect to stay in power only for a short period of time. Such governments are unlikely to adopt policies that foster long-term economic success as they would not exist in power to enjoy their benefits. This is in contrast to stationary bandits who expect to stay in power for a longer time – thus increasing the chances of them formulating policies that will bring about economic growth and prosperity. American economist and social scientist Mancur Olson first coined the term for his book *Power and Prosperity* (2000).

MORE ON THE WEB

Video: Journey through Chennai's underground metro <http://bit.ly/chnmtrro>

SHELF HELP

Lonely hearts club

'Men Without Women', for Hemingway and Murakami

SUDIPTA DATTA

If Ernest Hemingway were to retell his *Men Without Women* (1927) for the modern-day reader, would it read anything like Haruki Murakami's *Men Without Women* (2017), the Japanese existentialist's latest collection of stories? Hemingway's 14 stories were about boxers and bullfighters, gangsters and soldiers, macho in their occupation, but lost souls otherwise.

In Murakami's seven stories, the men may not have macho habits, but they are all alone, members of the lonely hearts club, having lost their women to either other men or disease.

An Italian soldier, mourning the death of his wife, cautions the narrator against marriage in one of Hemingway's short tales ('In another country'): "He cannot marry... He should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose." In Murakami's title story, a man gets a call from a

former girlfriend's husband, who tells him that she has committed suicide. He is baffled – he hadn't been in touch with her for a while. Why was he called? There are no straight answers, no plain-speaking like the Italian soldier does. Murakami's protagonist is left "dangling between knowledge and ignorance", like many of his characters.

This story has an affinity with Hemingway's 'Hills like White Elephants' in which he plays down all emotions as a couple discusses a heart-wrenching issue – of their unborn child, without the word 'abortion' ever being mentioned once.

If Hemingway's early short stories in *Men Without Women* gave us an inkling of some of the themes that would interest him in his later, more famous, books like *A Farewell to Arms*; *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; or even *The Old Man and the Sea* – like war, death, survival and re-

lationships – Murakami's stories too come with Murakami motifs: jazz, smoky bars, the Beatles and whimsical spirits.

At least two stories in the Murakami collection have Beatles' songs – 'Drive My Car' and 'Yesterday' – as titles. In the former, a young woman driver is hired by an actor after his licence has been taken away following a minor accident. The two begin a conversation – she tells him of her unhappy childhood and he tells her of his shocking discovery of his wife's infidelity.

Both writers are masters at exploring fragile relationships, the language pared to the bone, emotions kept at the minimum.

In 1997, the American writer Richard Ford, exploring the world of male rituals, wrote *Women with Men: Three Stories*, to find out how different – or similar – were his men from Hemingway's, turning the title on its head. But that's another story.

FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 15, 1967

Non-Congress move for new all-India party

A fourteen-member steering committee with Mr. Humayun Kabir, former Union Minister, as convenor was formed at the evening session of the two-day convention of representatives of non-Congress leaders which commenced in Patna to explore the possibility of forming an all-India party to provide dynamic leadership to the people and to work for the fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of the masses. The convention of representatives of nine regional non-Congress parties, the Chief Ministers of non-Congress Governments and some veteran non-party leaders is meeting at the invitation of the Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha. Delegates from Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, East Punjab Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Tripura are attending the convention. The steering committee will draw up preamble and suggest a suitable name for the party which will be placed for approval at the open session to-morrow [May 15].

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 15, 1917

Indians in South Africa: Merriman's Speech

The Congress of the Cape British Indian Council was held in the City Hall to ask Government to consider sympathetically questions concerning the citizenship of Indians, their marriages and immigration. Mr. Merriman opened the Congress with a brilliant speech in which he described how all classes in India were doing their duty in supporting the Empire. Britain's name in the world would as time advanced, depend upon how she ruled India, but possibly the time was not yet ripe for great changes. He urged Indians in South Africa to ask for redress of their grievances in a moderate constitutional way and make the Union Government's burden as light as possible, then Government would not turn a deaf ear. The Delegates passed a Resolution in favour of moderation.

DATA POINT

Mango mania in the Gulf

GCC countries imported nearly two thirds of the total number of mangoes exported from India in 2016-17*. UAE was the top importer *DATA FROM APRIL 2016 TO FEBRUARY 2017

Importing Country	Exports in ₹ lakh	Quantity in '000s	Ratio of exports (%)
UAE	20,387.85	24,392.84	52.03
Nepal	1,495.32	8,943.81	19.08
U.K.	4,937.59	3,015.13	6.43
Saudi Arabia	2,014.43	1,969.83	4.2
Qatar	1,804.35	1,899.03	4.05
Bangladesh	254.16	1,119.20	2.39
Bahrain	820.24	941.87	2.01
Kuwait	1,490.35	855.57	1.82
Singapore	799.03	786.46	1.68
Oman	733.52	783.54	1.67
U.S.	1,597.21	634.6	1.35

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF COMMERCE